

My name is Betty Berger. I live in Meriden and I am a volunteer District 5 Lead Ambassador for the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network. I am testifying today in favor of Senate Bill 399, to restore funding to the Tobacco Health and Trust Fund to be used for tobacco control. I am asking that you consider restoring \$12 million annually to this fund. At the current time the State of Connecticut receives 0 dollars for tobacco cessation and education.

My son was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Disease when he was 13 years old. He is one of the lucky ones who is now a 34-year survivor. His father was a smoker which is most likely the main contributor to his cancer diagnosis. Jeff went through 2 years of chemo and radiation treatments and was cancer free for four and a half years when he relapsed. At 17 he went through more chemo and this time it wasn't as successful. At 20 he had a Stem Cell transplant and has been cancer free for 27 years. However, being cancer free doesn't come without residual health issues. He has Diabetes and at 46 had a double bypass and a valve replacement, which the doctors have said are a direct result of chemo and radiation treatments.

I have seen what smoking does. Because of smoking my husband died at 51 of a heart attack. He started smoking in high school and smoked up till the day he passed away. So many other diseases are caused by smoking and second-hand smoke. My older sister smoked since she was 15 and died at 67 from COPD. Many of my family members have suffered through cancer treatments because they smoked. They all started smoking at a very young age.

Here in Connecticut, 28.7% of our high school students are now using tobacco products. As Big Tobacco has been working hard to addict future generations with e-cigarettes and other tobacco products, the need for funding for tobacco prevention programs has never been greater.

Everyone benefits from fact-based tobacco control programs. If nothing is done to reduce tobacco use 56,000 Connecticut kids will ultimately die prematurely from smoking. And each year we continue to do nothing 4,900 people in Connecticut die from smoking. Connecticut can and must do better.

Funding Connecticut's tobacco control program at \$12 million annually is a crucial investment towards keeping kids from starting to use tobacco and helping people already addicted to quit. Asking you to please co-sponsor bill Senate Bill 399 and advocate for \$12 million in annual funding to fight tobacco use in our state. Help us make cancer a thing of the past.

Thank you for allowing me to tell my story.

Betty Berger
Meriden, Connecticut